

A Necessary Advice for profitably Reading
BOOKS of CONTROVERSIE.

Extracted out of *Walsingham's Search into Matters of Religion*,
Part 3. c. 10. p. 468.

To which is added,

Thirteen QUERES of RELIGION or LIBERTY.

Together with

An Explanation of the *Roman Catholics Belief* concerning these Four
Points: Their CHURCH, WORSHIP, JUSTIFICATION, and
CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

As it was presented to some Persons of Quality, for their Particular
Satisfaction.

WHoever you are, who intend to employ your self in Reading
Books of Controversy, in order to your Satisfaction in Reli-
gion,

1. You must apprehend this matter as a Point of singular moment
and Importance, and not read lightly, either for curiosity as many
do, or negligently for recreation, or to pass the time; nor with the
Spirit of Contradiction to find out Faults, whereon to quarrel, with-
out just occasion: but sincerely, and in Conscience; making God
himself the Judge; and proposing for that end, the only knowledge and
finding out of this Truth for your direction and instruction, and his
glory and service; for by this way, you will, as it were, oblige him
to give you Light and Assistance to discern the same. And you must
make account, that if the true comprehension or error, in any one
principal Article in Controversy between us, doth draw with it the
peril of Eternal Damnation, if we miss therein; how much more in
them altogether, whereof you intend to make Judgment by this your
reading; for which cause you have great need to stand attent, be hum-
ble, devout, indifferent, pray much, and be earnest with God to enligh-
ten you in this behalf.

2. When you begin to read about any Controversy, you must en-
deavour first, to apprehend well and briefly the true State of the Que-
stion, not believing one side only, but searching out what each side
saith and holdeth therein; for in this Point above others, you shall
find fraud oftentimes used by Writers of divers Sorts and Sects, every
one proposing the State of the Question advantageously, as himself
would have the Reader to understand it, and not as his Adversary
doth hold it indeed.

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3. When you have the true State of the Question, be very careful to hold the same continually in your Mind, making often reflection and recourse thereto, about the Discourses you shall read in your Author, considering well and attentively, whether they be to the purpose in hand, and do level right at the mark proposed or no, or run aside to impertinent matters, as often they do, and fill up Leaves with things, that are far from the principal substance of the Question. So as this must serve you, as the Plummets or Square doth the Mason or Architect, to tell you whether the Building go streight or no. And whatsoever you find that inferreth not, or concludeth not the principal Point in question, that you must lay aside for the time, tho it be otherwise never so witty, pleasant or profitable, until you have considered that which toucheth the purpose directly; for you shall find many Authors in these our Days, who pretending to prove directly some Conclusion in Controversy, will afterwards slip aside, and draw you into so many by-matters, as will either confound your Judgment and Memory, or weary your Patience, and thereby make all your Reading unprofitable, and to no purpose.

4. Ponder well the weight of all such Arguments as are alledged. For albeit they be to the purpose and not wholly impertinent; yet they may be weak and feeble, and not able to infer so much as is required. And these may be of *Two Sorts*. Either out of Scripture, or ancient Fathers. As to the Scriptures, so far as not the sound of Words, but the true Sense and Meaning thereof is that which most importeth; the securest way, and most reasonable to assure our selves of the true meaning of it, is to look and consider, how the same was understood and interpreted by Antient Fathers before these our Controversies did arise. As for Example, *Catholics* alledge for Purgatory Fire, *1 Cor. 3. Ipse salvus erit sic tamen quasi per ignem*. The Antient Fathers understood it so. *Protestants* alledge on their side these Words of *Solomon*, *Where the Tree falleth, there it lyeth*. But cannot bring any one Father for it in that Sense.

As for the Fathers themselves, when they are alledg'd by any Party, it is to be considered in what Age they wrote, and whether that which they say was ever found to have been contradicted, or reprehended by others of that Age or after them. For when this is not found, tho any Fathers Sentence doth not make a Matter fully *de fide*, yet it is a weighty Proof, the thing which he affirmeth was so believed by the whole Church of his Days, and consequently it would be great temerity to discredit the same; for so much as that Church being acknowledged by all to have been the true Catholic Church, it must needs be presumed to have held nothing generally, that the Catholic known Church of the precedent Age did not also believe and teach; and so

from one Age to another, both upwards and downwards, may this Demonstration be made, which ought to be a great Motive to a discreet man to think seriously hereof.

5. It is much to be considered, when the Testimony of any antient approved Father is brought forth, whether it be conform to the rest of his Doctrine or no, containing a Conclusion, purposely treated by him, and not some particular Saying, wrested from him by violence; as oftentimes *Protestants* use to do. And therefore when the Matter is of importance, his whole Discourse is to be seen and perused, with what goeth before and what cometh after, to see how they hang together. And this I advertise you of in particular, that whensoever you see any clear or pregnant Authority of any one Antient Father, alledged by *Protestants* for their own side, there do you stand attent and examin the place exactly, and I do assure you, you shall find either fraud used in misalledging or misconstruing, or that the Place it self, well considered, will answer it self; for Truth cannot be contrary to Truth. With the observance of this only Note you will be sure to have all the Current of ancient Holy Fathers with you.

6. This is also worthy your weighing, that *Protestant* Writers upon all occasions seek, as it were by anticipation or prevention, to diminish the credit of the Ancient Fathers, when they are brought against them; making comparison between them and Scripture (where notwithstanding there is no comparison at all) and telling their Readers, they are not to be believed as Judges in Controversy, except they bring Scripture, and that you must think, understood and expounded in such sort as they themselves may like the Exposition; which is an Argument they have no confidence indeed in Fathers, tho' for a shew they make fair weather with them for a time. And this is one notorious difference between them and us, that when they alledg any place out of ancient Fathers, sounding to the Favour of any Doctrine of theirs that is in Controversy with us; if you demand them, whether they will stand absolutely to the Fathers determination in that, and all other Controversies he handleth, they will refuse it, but we not, if it be a Matter not contradicted or censured by any other Father, or by the Church of that time.

7. And lastly, I must advertise you, that when you have read all the *Protestant* Writers, which you will always find of the same Spirit in slippery dealing; yea, and when you have read all the Books of our side also, if it were possible for you to read and ponder them all, you will hardly find any certain Rule to resolve upon by your much Reading; for the one saying, and the other unsaying; and the one accusing the other of Falshood, and protesting Truth themselves, will always hold your Mind in suspence. And the Controversies are so many,

ny, and the Discourses so large upon every Controversy, and the shifts of them who mean not simply are so innumerable, that it will be impossible for you to quiet and settle your Judgment, without some more certain Rule than Reading at random. And albeit it were possible for a Learned Person, studious and patient of so much Labour, and had the Commodity of Books, to run through every Controversy; yet is it not possible for thousands that have not these helps. And yet we must think, God has left some way for them also, both to inform and resolve themselves securely in matters of Religion, which concern their Salvation. And this way is no other than the Universal, Visible, Catholic Church.

He who leaving his own Judgment relyeth upon the Authority and Determination of the Universal, Visible, Christian Church, as commended and proposed by *Christ* Himself to be obeyed, descending down from age to age for a publick Direction of all until the end of the World; this man, besides the merit of obedience, deserveth also the praise of the highest wisdom; for to prefer the Judgment of so great a number of learned, holy and vertuous men as have been, and are, in the Church from time to time, before his own private Judgment, is most evident and apparent wisdom, even considered according to the Principles of Human Wisdom; but more if we respect divine Reasons: as namely, That our Saviour himself hath promised to be with the Church, and assist the same with his Holy Spirit unto the

Matth. 16.

1 Tim. 3. 15.

*Aug. lib. cont
Cresc. c. 33*

Worlds end; inasmuch that the *gates of hell shall never prevail against it*, to bring it into Errour. And the Apostle *St. Paul* doth assure us, that it is and shall be such a pillar and foundation of truth, that we may build and rely upon the same without fear of falling. Which thing the Holy Father *St. Augustine* considering, gave this general Direction in his Book against *Cresconius* the Heretick: *Quisquis falli metuit hujus obscuritate questionis, Ecclesiam de ea consultat*: If any one fear lest he should be deceived by the Obscurity of this Question, let him consult the Church about it: Which must needs be meant of the Governours and Chief Pastors of the Church. This way then I advise you to, as a more compendious, easie, and certain way, than to weary your self by reading many Books, whereof one doth impugn and contradict another.

This was the Method used by the Primitive Church. *St. Paul* said to the *Corinthians*, *Si quis videtur contentiosus esse, non talem consuetudinem non habemus nec Ecclesia Dei*; But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such Custom, nor the Church of God. See *Tertulian's* whole Book de *Præscript. adversus Hæret.* Also *Irenæus* his Five Books against Heretics. *Queries*

*1 Cor. 11.
16.*

QUERIES

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Religion or Liberty.

I. **W**Hether the Flock and Church of *CHRIST* (to whom was promised Grace and Eternal Happiness) be that Company and Society of People Christened in his Name, who by Order of Government, Rules and Decrees from him and his Apostles, were united in Faith, Worship, Discipline, and manner of Life called Religion?

II. Whether by Separation, or Excommunication from that Society and Unity, are lost those Promises?

III. Doth Christian Religion consist in Matters of Morality, or Ceremony of Indifferency to be accepted, or rejected, and altered, at the choice, judgment, and well-liking of Private Persons, Corporations, or States?

IV. Or doth it consist in the Laws and Rules of Faith, and Life of Christians, so important and binding, as that by the contempt thereof one must lose Eternal Happiness?

V. Whether those Laws and Rules taught by Christ and his Apostles, bind as well the Christians of succeeding Ages (who could not be present to see and hear them) as they bound those who were present, heard them taught, and saw their Original Writings?

VI. Whether after the Death of Christ and his Apostles and Disciples, by his Institution other Persons successively in all Ages, were in order chosen and authorised, as Pastors and Church-Magistrates, to preserve, teach, and promulgate those binding Rules to all Nations?

VII. Were they Clergy-men or Lay-men, by whom immediately they were chosen, and authorised in those high Functions?

VIII. Were all Christians in succeeding Ages bound to believe what those succeeding Pastors or Supreme Church-Magistrates taught them, as binding Laws of Christ and his Apostles; and that the Writings by them collected, preserved, and delivered in a different Language

Queries of Religion or Liberty.

Language from the Original, were the true Copies of Original Apostolic Writings; and that the Sentence, Interpretations, and Use thereof delivered by them in Supreme Councils, for Unity and Peace, and to prevent Schisms and Errors, were Rules which all Christians were bound to follow?

IX. If not, then, What other Order was there left by Christ and his Apostles, for the Christians of succeeding Ages, to be truly and undoubtedly informed what Christ and his Apostles taught, or wrote so many Ages before, as binding Laws to them that should come after, who never heard them speak, nor saw any of their Original Writings?

X. Whether to the Testimonies and Decrees of those succeeding Pastors and Supreme Church-Magistrates, and to their Sentence given upon the Controversies of Religion, risen in divers Ages, is due at least as much Credit and Obedience (altho' perhaps some of them might be vicious in Life) as in Temporal Matters is due to the Laws, Interpretations, and Sentences of Supreme Civil Magistrates?

XI. Or hath *CHRIST* left such Liberty to all succeeding Christians, that they need not believe, credit, or obey any the Testimonies, Laws, Interpretations, or Sentences given by any Supreme Legal Governours, Civil or Ecclesiastical, in their respective Councils, farther than every particular Person, in his private Judgment, shall like, chuse, and accept of?

XII. Whether a few particular Persons, or some few of the Magistrates, Civil or Ecclesiastical, for Discontent, or differing in Judgment from the united Body of the rest, may, under pretence of Conscience, or Reformation, separate themselves from that united Body and Society, and make new Translations and Interpretations of Written Laws different from the former, and by Force and Persuasion draw People from their old Society, Unity, and Obedience, to New Congregations, Institutions, and Rules of their framing, opposite and destructive to the former?

XIII. Whether Persons so acting, are better than Rebels and Usurpers, or such as *Simon Magus*, and those that deserted the Apostles to follow him; and therefore to be avoided, as Persons separated from the Flock and Religion of *CHRIST*?

If any give Answer, it is desired to be Categorical and short, without Discourses of things not demanded.

An Explanation of the Roman Catholics Belief, concerning these Four Points: Their CHURCH, WORSHIP, JUSTIFICATION, and CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

As it was presented to some Persons of Quality, for their particular Satisfaction.

I. **W**E believe the Holy Scriptures to be of Divine Inspiration, and Infallible Authority ; and whatsoever is therein contained we firmly assent unto, as to the Word of God, the Author of all Truth.

But since in the Holy Scripture there are some things *hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstable wrest to their own destruction*, 2 Pet. 3. 16. we therefore profess (for the ending of Controversies in our Religion, and settling of Peace in our Consciences) to submit our private Judgments to the Judgment of the Church in a free General Council.

II. We humbly believe the Sacred Mystery of the *Blessed Trinity*, one Eternal, Almighty, and Incomprehensible God, whom only we adore and worship, as alone having Sovereign Dominion over all things, to whom alone we acknowledge as due from Men and Angels, *all Glory, Service and Obedience*, 1 Tim. 1. 17. abhorring from our Hearts, as a most detestable Sacrilege, to give our Creators Honour to any Creature whatsoever.

And therefore we solemnly protest, That by the Prayers we address to *Angels and Saints*, we intend no other than humbly to solicit their assistance before the Throne of God, as we desire the Prayers of one another here upon Earth ; not that we hope any thing from them, as Original Authors thereof, but from God the fountain of all Goodness, thro' *Jesus Christ* our only Mediator and Redeemer.

Neither do we believe any Divinity or Vertue to be in *Images*, for which they ought to be worshipped, as the *Gentiles* did their *Idols*, but we retain them with due and decent respect in our Churches, as Instruments, which we find by experience, do often assist our Memories, and excite our Affections.

III. We firmly believe, that no force of Nature, or dignity of our best Work, can merit our *Justification* ; but we are justified freely by Grace, through the Redemption that is in *Jesus Christ*, Rom. 3. 24.

And tho we should by the Grace of God persevere unto the end in a Godly life, and Holy Obedience to the Commandments ; yet are our hopes of Eternal Glory still built upon the Mercy of God, and the Merits of *Christ Jesus*.

All other *Merits* (according to our sense of that Word) signifie no more

more than Actions done by the assistance of God's Grace, to which it has pleased his Goodness to promise a Reward; a Doctrine so far from being unsuitable to the Sense of the Holy Scriptures, that it is their principal Design to invite and provoke us to a diligent observance of the Commandments, by promising Heaven as the Reward of our Obedience. 1 Tim. 4. 8. *Godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise of this life, and of that which is to come.* And, Rom. 2. 6. *God will render to every man according to his deeds, to them, who by patient confidence in well doing, seek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, Eternal Life.* And again, Rom. 8. 13. *If you live after the flesh, you shall die; but if through the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the Body, you shall live.* And Heb. 6. 10. *God is not unjust to forget your work, and labour of love, which you have shewed for his name, &c.* Nothing being so frequently repeated in the word of God, as his gracious Promises to recompense with Everlasting Glory the Faith and Obedience of his Servants: Nor is the Bounty of God barely according to our Works, but high and plentiful, even beyond our Capacities, giving full measure, heaped up, pressed down, and running over, into the bosoms of all that love him, Luc. 6. 38.

Thus we believe the Merit or Rewardableness of Holy Living (both which signifie the same thing with us) arise not from the self-value even of our best Actions, as they are ours; but from the Grace and Bounty of God: And for our selves, we sincerely profess, *When we have done all these things which are commanded us, we are unprofitable servants,* Luc. 17. 10. *having done nothing but that which was our duty;* so that our boasting is not in our selves, but all our glory is in Christ.

IV. We firmly believe, and highly reverence the *Moral Law*, being so solemnly delivered to Moses upon the Mount, Exod. 20. Matth. 19. Eccles. 12. 13. so expressly confirmed by our Saviour in the Gospel, and containing in it self so perfect an Abridgment of our whole Duty both to God and Man.

Which *Moral Law* we believe obliges all Men to proceed with faithfulness and sincerity in their mutual Contracts one towards another; and therefore our constant Profession is, That we are most strictly and absolutely bound to the exact and entire Performance of our Promises, made to any Persons, of what Religion soever; much more to the Magistrates and Civil Powers, under whose Protection we live, whom we are taught by the Word of God to obey, not only for fear, but conscience sake, and to whom we will most faithfully observe our Promises of Duty and Obedience, notwithstanding any Dispensation, Absolution, or other Proceedings of any Foreign Power or Authority whatsoever.

Wherefore we utterly deny and renounce that false and scandalous Position, that *Faith is not to be kept with Hereticks*, as most uncharitably imputed to our Practices, and most unjustly pinned upon our Religion.

These we sincerely and solemnly profess, as in the sight of God, the Searcher of all Hearts, taking the words plainly and simply, in their usual and familiar sense; without any Equivocation or Mental Reservation whatsoever.